

Education Committee

H.B. No. 5467

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RED RIBBON PASS PROGRAM

February 27th 2016

First and foremost, thank you to the Education Committee for raising such an important initiative. As a former Physical Education teacher at an elementary school I saw the importance of physical activity being a part of a student's life. From my observations and relationships with classroom teachers, it was clear how engaged students became in the classroom after receiving physical education. Their minds seemed sharper, their hands seemed to rise up to answer questions more, and they seemed to score better on tests. Teachers starting structuring testing times after my class, or when time permitted, they would take their students out for an extra 10 minute "recess" right before a test or before "buckling up" for an intense lesson.

Teachers also found that there were less behavior problems in the classroom. It seemed the more active a student was throughout the day, the more engaged students were, teachers saw better test results and less discipline issues were reported; imagine that!

After my tenure at the elementary school level, I tried my hand at the high school in my district with Health Education. Since I believe that we are a sum of our experiences and considering the results I saw first-hand at the elementary level, I brought the idea of physical activity into my classroom. At first there were some rumblings; getting teenagers to "move" anytime, especially at 7:30 A.M., was a challenge, but eventually they bought in. As the students became more comfortable with the type of movement they experienced and they learned *why* we were doing it, they started to see the value in it; and so did others. People on the State Board of Education, and my state consultant heard what I was doing and wanted to hear more about it. I presented a sample lesson to the State Board of Education and in 2011 the Hartford Courant did an article on my classroom that landed the front page!

Dr. Fede and Mrs. Ciotto are living examples of this phenomenon. They have taken this project, PASS, all over the United States and across the globe. They are sharing this extraordinary idea of being active not just at recess or in physical education class but in short strategic times during the day. Whether it is just a "brain break" or embedding physical activity into curriculum, this is just "what the Doctor ordered" for a healthy, motivated, educated and engaged brain. Emerging research is finding strong ties between physical fitness and academic performance. The idea is that exercise makes the heart beat faster, pumping oxygen to the brain and improving the ability to think.

A report from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention

(http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/health_and_academics/pdf/pa-pe_paper.pdf) found:

Studies looked at a broad range of outcomes. Researchers reported that participating in physical activity was positively related to outcomes including academic achievement, academic behaviors, and indicators of cognitive skills and attitudes, such as concentration, memory, self-esteem, and verbal skills.

Now, in my current role as Curriculum Director of Health and Physical Education for the town of Hamden I fully encourage all teachers to experience PASS and all its benefits. We have brought PASS to three of our Elementary Schools this year as a pilot and are looking to do more next year. We are also planning to expand to more grades as teachers are becoming more excited about the positive results of what physical

activity can bring to their students and classrooms. I believe this, along with amazing teachers and teaching strategies are the reasons why out of all Alliance Districts Hamden was ranked #1 in reading and #2 in math according to Smarter Balance test results.

Choosing to recognize schools for becoming physically active as a Red Ribbon PASS School is not only going to change the face of physical activity, but it will change the face of our classrooms, test scores and our students. Think of a state with fewer classroom disruptions, more academic success, more confident students and a thinner waistline. Let Connecticut lead the way!

Thank you,

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